



## Medical School Hotline

### The Role of International Medicine in Medical Education

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The world is rapidly becoming smaller. For many of us vast portions of the world were in "black boxes," but are now open books. Russia and China are just two examples.

The economy of the United States and Hawaii is currently slow. On the other hand, countries such as Thailand and Vietnam have economies that are so vibrant, a drive from their airport to their downtown cities paints a panorama that is totally different than several years ago.

Medicine worldwide is also dramatically changing. Transplantation of organs is an important topic in Hawaii with lung transplantation being seriously considered. In the People's Republic of China, however, the transplantation of organs is a regular operation. Numerous organs including the pancreas are routinely transplanted.

Trauma in the United States and also in Hawaii is an important aspect of medical care. However, in "rural" hospitals of Thailand,

where automobile accidents are common, the attachment of limbs and neurosurgical procedures on accident victims is an occurrence far more common than in the United States/Hawaii.

It is evident from the above that International Medical Education must be an aspect in the education of all medical students and medical housestaff. To not provide International Medical Education would be to short-change the future of our medical society.

Medical Education is best made "hands-on." This means that International Medical Education is best made through an exchange program with students and residents from the University of Hawaii School of Medicine spending one to six months in a foreign country and physicians from those countries spending an equivalent stay at the University of Hawaii School of Medicine.

Such exchange programs have been developed and are highly active. Exchange programs have been developed in Thailand, the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, and Japan. Such exchange programs are formalized, ongoing, and mutually beneficial.

For example, negotiations have just concluded for a fourth-year medical student/first-year medical resident to receive a scholarship to spend three to six months in the People's Republic of China. In return for a full scholarship, the recipient agrees to stay at the University of Hawaii School of Medicine for three-years of Internal Medicine Training. The experiences such an individual learns in China will be of interest to colleagues, and a delightful interchange of culture is anticipated. The People's Republic of China sent a delegation to Hawaii in the Fall of 1996.

Although didactic programs are of some benefit, they are often too "generic" and have limited educational impact. As a result, where didactic sessions are given, they are given by individuals who have actively participated in the health care system in foreign countries. For example, medical students and residents have recently given lectures at the University of Hawaii School of Medicine on topics such as Disseminated Strongyloides, Rotator Cuff Injuries in Sumo Wrestlers, Malarial Prophylaxis, and Gastroenteritis. For the latter two topics, the presenters themselves had actively experienced the frustrations of the side effects of medications and the results of significant dehydration. Such lectures have a much greater impact.

The University of Hawaii School of Medicine will continue to develop such exchange programs. If any individual is interested in any aspect of these programs, they are invited to contact the Chairman of the International Affairs Committee, Satoru Izutsu, PhD (ph: 956-5505) or Edward Morgan, MD (ph: 521-8305).

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